



Goats Eat Oats and Does Eat Oats, But Goats Make Better Cheese

Steve and Veronica Baetje settled in Sainte Genevieve County specifically to raise goats and produce goat cheese. The climate, soil, topography and water of the area, combined with the growing wine industry in the region, provided the perfect environment for the raising of their goat herd and the making of goat cheese.

Baetje Farms is a family goat cheese operation. The family began goat cheese production in 2006 with the construction of the first production plant. A second cheese production plant was added in 2011 as a result of increased demand. Many of the cheeses Baetje produces are classified as "Pure Artisan Farmstead" goat cheeses.

This means the cheeses are produced solely from their own herds' milk. While Baetje Farms had no difficulty producing quality cheese, marketing of the product presented a problem.

Missouri awarded a \$49,999 Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) to Baetje Farms to assist with marketing organic goat cheese. The funds were used to expand the market to the St. Louis metropolitan area and access specialty markets. In addition, the grant allowed Baetje Farms to create a website through which retail and wholesale orders are taken and shipped.

As a result of the VAPG, the Baetje family's cheeses are distributed coast-to-coast; Maine to California; and sold border-to-border; Texas to Wisconsin. In addition, Baetje Farm cheeses are served in over 25 local restaurants and wineries. To date, Baetje cheeses have won over 60 national and international awards.



Part of the Baetje Farm goat herd from which all milk is collected to produce their award-winning cheeses.

Obligation Amount: \$49,999

Date of Obligation: FY 2014

Congressional District: Representative Smith, MO 08; Senators McCaskill and Blunt

Partners: N/A

Demographics: City of Bloomsdale and Ste. Genevieve County

Impact: VAPG allowed Baetje Farms to expand their goat cheese product line and identify and increase market and customer base.